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FRANÇOIS LARUELLE: FUTURE STRUGGLE, GNOSIS, AND THE LAST-HUMANITY

LEXICON, PHILOFICTION ANGEL, CLON, LAST-HUMANITY, NON-LARUELLE, NON-PHILOSOPHY, REBELL

As that non-philosopher François Laruelle recently said "It is necessary to welcome a certain return of gnosis against philosophy, institutional and academic conformism (amongst other things), but we have to ask ourselves, how do we finally make room for it when it has been condemned to an eternal rebellion. Is it possible to introduce gnosis into the very foundations of thought, even if it means shaking those foundations? ... If there is any future for rebellion (having a gnostic motif rather than a classically philosophical one) then it is a rediscovery of contemporary post-Marxist gnosis." (Larulle, p. 189: *Struggle And Utopia At The End Times Of Philosophy*)

One of the dangers in any hyperstitional endeavor is to literalize what is figural and hyperbolic, spiritual and sacred, thereby turning what is a road to exuberance, waste, and expenditure into a campaign for political mastery and control. As I've begun restudying the ancient Gnostics and their heirs, the ancient dualisms both spiritual and political I've begun to see a pattern take shape as the ideologues of the past two centuries have battled over the political body of the world. Below is just a flight of anguish in the registry of such strangeness...

In his *A Rebel in the Soul: A Theory of Future Struggle* Laruelle proposes a non-philosophical critique of non-religion, which he tells us is "urgently needed" (188). The monstrous discourse against which he seeks to test his non-philosophical prowess, along with the use of gnosis as an "*a posteriori* source" (189), is the Platonic core of Marxism as exposed in the writings of Marx and Engels Hegelian materialism.

An interesting alternative from a more reactionary front is the work of *Luciano Luigi Pellicani* whose *Revolutionary Apocalypse: Ideological Roots of Terrorism* paints a sharp and bitter picture of the underlying literalisms of the Gnostic Mythos as applied to political movements from the Jacobins to the Communists and Fascists of the last century. The refrain or leitmotif resounding as a small bell in the abyss of socialist and fascist abysses heard in his pages revolves around the "concerned with tragic events that were dominated by one of the most extraordinary anthropological 'types' that has ever existed in the history of humanity: the professional revolutionary, generated by the cultural catastrophe provoked by the uncontrollable advance of modernity." (from preface) ... An 'Orphan of God' this rebel seeks none other than the purity of the Absolute, the Idea.

Even in Marx, as in his modern heirs Badiou and Žižek the Idea of Communism will infest the literal gnosis of their thought, permeate it to the point of obliterating reality in favor of an imagined Socialist Utopia. As Pellicani will have it:

Incapable of accepting reality, he aspires to build a completely new world in the light of a soteriological doctrine — dialectical gnosis — that he proclaims to be the “solved enigma of History.” At last everything will comply with desire, and God’s scepter will be in the hands of humanity. The professional revolutionary’s goal is the creation of an evangelical community, based on equality and planetary brotherhood. To do this, he is prepared to wage a war of destruction against those who have surrendered to mammon and allowed the domination of the law of universal trade that all-profanes and all-degrades. Hence, the destructive calling of gnostic revolution: not a single stone of the corrupt and corrupting world shall remain standing; hence, also, the inevitable destructive and self-destroying outcome of the revolutionary project to purify the existing through a policy of mass terror and annihilation.¹ (preface)

Whereas for the ancient Gnostics the Universe is the great enigma – House of the fallen Demiurge who has shaped the degraded matter of dust, stars, galaxies through the forces of black holes and gravity to his desires; creating an Iron Prison within which to play out his sadistic games upon those forlorn and naked apes, humanity. The dialecticians of socialism, that new gnosis seek to literalize and reduce this soteriological heterodoxy by infesting it in the movement of History itself, where the new Demiurgic powers and archons are none other than the elite brotherhood of those avant guard Intellectuals who will oust the old gods of Capitalism, and institute a new world of primitive communism: a society of equals living out their lives in a flat world of deregulated and stateless justice. Yet, as we all know what happened with such ideas was just the opposite: this strict voluntarism of the brotherhood of man turned into a primal horde of dictators and tyrannical war, a struggle for bare existence in which humans were sacrificed to the abstract principles that hung over their heads like so many Archons – a materialist Idealism. Whether in Communist Socialism or Fascist Socialism a collective tyranny ruled by the iron law of necessity dictated the terms and the terminal disease of these systems which in the end failed to deliver on their promise for the simple reason that they were built on a tissue of lies and subterfuge.

But let us return to Laurelle, see what he has discovered in the hinterlands of this rebellious gnosis. Laurelle will begin by asking a specific question of this new gnosis: *Is a non-philosophical project capable of carrying the Idea of Revolution to a higher power than Marxism, be it by contesting the philosophies of history and their criminal implementation, or does it remain a theoreticist activity without a tomorrow?* (189) For him the key to the project is to save gnosis from its religious and Platonic forbears, to reevaluate the problem of rebellion itself, to interrogate it and even risk the naïve reintroduction of a reactionary and resentful aspect into its sacrosanct halls, yet in doing so to purge these very elements, critique their dark force of contamination. As he’ll state it every “philosophy of force and action is contaminated by division and reciprocity of action and reaction, which makes action turn into reaction” (192). Instead this must be short-circuited through the power of non-action, by the force of “action-without-reaction” (192).

Reading Laurelle is like entering an abstract world of strange relations, his linguistic arsenal exposes itself as a thick and opaque system of non-language, a world where one edges into the borderlands where the forests are so ingrown with thorns and briars that one has difficulty even knowing where one is at much less discovering a path into the inscapes of this wilderness beyond philosophy. He’ll spend pages in shadows, repeating gestures in a language of silence that exposes nothing more than the hint of a non-conceptual movement, and when one is suddenly exposed to the nakedness of some non-concept like ‘Overmaster’ or ‘Rebel’ one almost confuses these with known words rather than the unknowing textures of unbidden non-thought. It’s as if in naming he is actually operating within an unaming process, not a deconstruction of the linguistic blanks (those undecidable junctures sinking into the abyss of non-meaning) but rather a sheer suspension of the word in its absence; neither a tracing of the infinite genealogies of its relations, nor the exposure of its unconcealment, but a jutting up of black forces and sounds out of anterior regions where thought gives birth to its othering... (Lorca would call it “duende”...).

Instead of learning to learn, it is more of a long education in unlearning, not so much a destruction of the rhetorical power of anterior thought as it is the grafting of what cannot be named onto the Real. There is something of the daemonic in this discourse that is itself non-discursive and more of a gamble, a reckoning against the Logos of philosophical speculation. Like Satan in Milton’s great epic Laurelle will speak from the depths of a non-religious struggle, a rebellion into the Real:

Non-revolted man has the primacy of the Real and determines rebellion by struggle but rebellion is the radical and transcendental beginning of combat. ... It all begins with or in rebellion but all of it is determined by the spirit of struggle. (204)

The Rebel assumes the habitation of the hylic man of the Gnostics, a sleeper and automaton a “quasi-robot.. but without having the materiality of a robot. Because he is Man-in-person or the future.” (205). Why transcendental, then? Because the Rebel is the carrier of the event, the happening and movement which carries the “foreclosing of Humanity to overmastery” (206). To enact the dictum of Marx to transform the world the Rebel must “constitute his proper domain” by blending mastery and rebellion. Laurelle tells us there is a Kingdom of Rebels, or at least a “City of Heretics and Irreconcilables” (206). The Rebel exists in that transitional moment between past and future, a movement that intervenes indirectly into the material domain enacting its struggles as from the outside in.

The Rebel is this cloned creature of the Angel. "If we, in our way, resume the thread of the vocabulary of (non-)religious gnosis and say the Angel, if we are fond of this term, then it is as just that aspect of the blend of mastery and rebellion but yet such that it appears transformed in its transcendence within the Rebel-subject" (207). Rather than some Platonic Idea incarnating itself in the flesh, Laruelle parses a non-Platonic non-philosophical "critique of the dialectic of Master and Slave" (Hegel) (207). In this strange amalgam of Angels of Philosophy, Rebelious doppelgangers of split realms, of a non-religious gnosis which disturbs both thought and struggle we discover the heart of this gnosis: it "is in reality the exterior perspective of the Angel or the People who come to theory or support a theoreticist position" (208). As he will admit in reality the Angel is a philosopher but in a religious mode by which religion redoubles itself (208). Suddenly the Platonism has returned by way of this doubling, this insertion of the transcendental Rebel "is of the order of a transcendental metaphysics, in the tradition that Kant called the "transcendental philosophy of the Ancients" having formed those famous "transcendentals" (Architypes) (209).

Here we see falling back into that ancient form of Gnosticism of the World as absolute Evil. "Hence the result is a hatred of the World that conditions the general structure of the apparatus utilized, and brings with it a certain refusal of cloning, the love of pure theory or theoreticism..." (209). Ultimately this dualising tendency of Platonism undoes itself in the movement of this doubling and redoubling, this cloning that shifts between transcendental and the immanence of the non-religious Rebel who no longer multiplies the mirrors of its existence. (The more I read Laruelle one wonders of the sanity of this project? Like William Blake creating his private mythologies of Los and Orc, Laruelle reenacts the labors of the negative as a hypergnostic strategy that folds itself in an atheistic extremity of immanent quarantine.) In fact he is aware of this double-bind this slippage into a sort of no-man's zone or schizophrenic delirium:

...gnosis is condemned either to arbitrarily giving itself philosophy and thinks from it, empirically ground its criteria without being able to reach the Real or in reaching it only in order to determine it in its empirical ways, or it's condemned to giving itself the separated Real, but then mastery or philosophy is absolutely contingent and without a relation to the Real as another world or another strangeness. (213-214)

In some ways Laruelle sees Philosophy as a demiurgic world in which the non-philosopher like an Angel of Philosophy enters its secret labyrinths and closed revolving systems of decision and non-decision as a messenger from the outer spheres troubling its irresolute and error prone habitation. Plato is the Father, Progenitor, and Demiurge of this "completed" realm, while he works the faulty materials from his transcendental position he does not and cannot encompass the exterior of thought, materialism (215). "Non-philosophy risks passing for an excessive wager on intelligence, and on philosophy, while gnosis wagers on popular stupidity, on the poor in spirit" (216). Ultimately non-philosophy hinges on the question of immanence:

What to do with language itself or thought when the Real is strictly immanent and determines language in this way? (216)

Non-philosophy has no doctrinal position of its own, it enters and disturbs the doctrines of the others as so many materials to be worked over, shaped, molded, realigned through the gnosis of a the Real. Philosophy is a sham, a fake simulation of the Real, a broken fabrication of ignorance and silence. The Real is outside language and philosophy, yet both are partially determined by the immanent influx of the real by indirection, a sleight-of-mind trick. The Real is a placeholder for the absolute outside of all thought, that which must not be named; only a mask reveals its dark impenetrability. "So we must hear by the Real a religious notion, God evidently, but yet we are not told how to philosophically reduce it?" (218)

MUNDUS IMAGINALIS

"We must include figures that are sometimes more anonymous and inhuman." (220) Under the sign of no sign – the empty sign, the World becomes Angel in this non-philosophical gnosis:

...the Angel is the affect of the World itself.. We will defend a thesis of the being-immanent of philosophizability as a World-affect, of philosophical fanaticism, or the World as an affect-without-affection in-the-last-Humaneity. The World as pure philosophizability is de-angelized or a de-Platonized Angel.

...

The case for saying the Angel falls from heaven comes from the "oriental" gnostics of the East. (223-225)

In my own reading of the ancient Gnostics both the Aeons and Angels were considered to be both entities and environments through which one moves as through a sphere or dimension both of time and space. Angels were considered messengers from either the powers of that which is within the Ogdoad or eight circles of the various dimensions of the Real. Under both Sufic, Christian-Gnostic, Jewish Kabbalist, and, even aspects of the Hermetic traditions Angels were not to be confused with the daimons of Greece as in Socrates. Rather they were partially the figural archetypes of Plato's Ideas, as well as the unformed and formless energetic forces of the Real that were apprehended only in that intermediate realm between Intellect and Affective (Passion), the Mundus Imaginalis – the World as Angel and the Angel as World. It was here in this mundane imaginal realm that those shamans, prophets, dreamers were lifted up into figural imaginings undisturbed by either intellect or passion. Laruelle takes

this whole tradition and inserts it into a secular revitalization that seems to seek a transvaluation of these myths into a non-philosophical apparatus to explain his use of Angel, Rebel, Overmaster, etc. Laurelle is an acquired taste not something one can suddenly take up and understand at first sitting, rather one must live with his works let them resonate off other non-philosophical worlds. "...it does not appear too extravagant that we set the Platonic clock back to the hour of the crime-World, that in particular we reevaluate the relation which gnosis has placed implicitly between philosophy and the category of the mortiferous (Heimarmene, fatal, deadly... causing spiritual death.) (226).

Transcendence is mortiferous, but death cannot remain anonymous under the threat of confusing itself with a simple destruction and must be put in relation to the victim as one of the first ways of naming Man. (227)

The only exception to Man is that they kill and philosophize their own kind: "the thought-world proceeds by way of an alienating belief that touches every human being, in knowing that their persecution or their murder, always local and particular, is accepted as being crime par excellence and reflects itself spontaneously as a dimension of the World, form-crime or crime-World (227). In the crime-World victims turn persecutor, persecutors victims; evil is the trap of belief in the crime-World, its mirror repeating the cloning process to an infinity of sets. The merciless precision of mathematical certainty becomes the pure gnosis of evil. Labyrinth or Abyss? Both? One wanders in a vacuum foundering in an endless sea of victims. Which comes first crime or victim? Causal reduplication turns toward inverse relations where time intersects the monstrous. "It is impossible to pass over this without saying more, without saying a non-philosophical word or two regarding the millions of murdered or persecuted left by history and so abandoning them to what may be a new form of generality" (229).

Here in the instant of last-Humaneity the Angel becomes the figure of subject subjected and subjugated to the power of persecution: the Angel becomes that part of Man which comes under persecution by the last-Humaneity. The identity of the Angel as the "divine or superhuman character of man" comes as the last "identity, that after which there will be nothing else, not even nothingness, above all not difference, comes to the subject from the depths of messianicity which forms humans" (230)

Even the World has a destiny; it is in the hands of the inversives rather than the subversives. (230)

Ultimately those who fall between the interstices of the Law and the Book wander the world in heretical non-dispersal: "Heretics are not a people dispersed to the four corners of the Earth, but a people without-World, of a diaspora of every place" (241). Only those abandoned to the winds, in exile from both heaven and earth, covered in the crimes of a crime-World find "grace in the eyes of Man who first loved them" (231). The final gift to the last instance of Humanity is the gift it gives itself: the gift of euthanasia; death by suicide. Only then will the World-less ones rise from their disaffected exile into a new Earth – an angelic realm devoid of angels or demons.

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1. Luciano Luigi Pellicani. *Revolutionary Apocalypse: Ideological Roots of Terrorism* (2003 by ETAS, R.C.S. Libri S.p.A., Milan, Italy)
 2. François Laruelle. *Struggle and Utopia at the End Times of Philosophy*. (Univocal, 2012)

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